

# Ten Tips: Defining YOUR Nanny's Job

A nanny works in your private home providing full charge child care for you according to your instructions and best safety practices. She cares for YOUR children, and at the end of the day YOU are perfectly entitled to set some firm “ground rules” for the nanny to follow. These are in addition to the formal [Work Agreement](#) that defined the hours, duties, compensation and benefits. Articulating these rules is the parents’ responsibility – the nanny is not a mind reader and not all parents work from the same set of rules. Following the rules is the nanny’s responsibility. Reasonable ground rules might include:

## 1. Activity schedules

You may establish limits on TV viewing, or even a total prohibition on TV viewing. Remember to consider the desired activities when selecting the nanny. If the child must be driven to activities, the nanny must be licensed and a [review of her DMV record](#) prior to employment is a best practice. If the nanny is taking the child to the community pool, she should be a swimmer. Some flexibility – for weather, illness, or the child’s stated preferences – should be allowed. House rules should be enforced consistently when either parents or nanny is in charge.

## 2. Meals and dietary instructions

Is nanny required to bring her own meals daily, or may she help herself to items in the pantry? Are there off limits foods? Note that the preschooler may be very curious about the nanny’s lunch; you don’t want her in the position where she has to feed your child too. Do you have special dietary rules for your child or household?

## 3. Napping instructions, within reason!

Many families allow their nanny broad discretion in scheduling the day, including naps. Others are quite firm on a specific schedule. Recognize that not all babies will sleep exactly according to your schedule, and that babies nap schedules evolve over time. It is difficult to conform to a nap schedule on week days that is not enforced on weekends!

## 4. Discipline style

This clearly should be discussed, in detail, in the interviewing process. A nanny should NEVER physically discipline your child, whether you request it or not! Do you prefer time out? Redirection? Are you open to several methods, allowing nanny to use what works for her with your child?

## 5. Nanny log or reporting instructions

A “[nanny log](#)” is a best practice. Also, payroll laws required that accurate and contemporaneous time tracking records be maintained. The nanny log also allows you to communicate on illness, medications, milestones, etc.

## 6. Emergency contact instructions

Who gets called first? What is the call sequence? What level of illness or injury do you consider significant enough to warrant a phone call, vs. waiting to discuss that evening? Nanny should have a medical power of attorney authorizing her to seek emergency medical care for your child.

### Investigate before you hire!

A thorough [background investigation](#) is an orderly process.

It is absolutely critical to the safety of your children that you thoroughly check the background of the person you are considering hiring. Even if s/he comes recommended by a friend or family, check things out yourself anyway!

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## 7. Personal conduct

May nanny have visitors during work hours? If a live in, are visitors allowed during time off? May nanny host play groups at your home? Do you need to meet these people first? Comfort levels vary here considerably – it is totally reasonable to request that play groups, if allowed, be in a public location such as a park or a mall or restaurant with an indoor child play area. Smoking restrictions? – most families require that nanny be a non-smoker, and that any guests, if allowed, also not smoke in the home or around the children. For live in nannies, alcohol use and overnights (same or opposite sex) should be discussed and agreed to in advance.

## 8. Safety issues

Keep doors locked or the alarm armed when in the home during the day? Evacuation instructions – in the event of a natural disaster, man-made disaster (derailed train emitting toxic material), or terrorism, where do you meet up? Remember, in local emergencies cell towers are often overwhelmed but text messaging almost always stays active.

[Discussion of Emergency Procedures: NannyNetwork.com](#)

## 9. Housekeeping

Be very specific and please discuss in the interview process. Nannies typically accept responsibility for the child's laundry, including linens, for preparation and clean up after nutritious meals and to teach children to clean up play areas. If your expectations include trash removal, emptying the dishwasher, etc. please make sure this is clear. If you have pet peeves – coffee cup in the sink at the end of the day, clothes left in the dryer – let nanny know! Many reasonable and well intended people have different housekeeping standards. Communication is vital so nanny understands expectations.

## 10. Travel outside the home

May nanny walk to the park, coffee shop and other local destinations? May nanny arrange "play groups" with other nannies and their charges? Does travel outside the home need to be pre-approved, or may nanny take advantage of a great balmy March afternoon to spend some time outdoors? Is nanny required to have her cell phone with her and charged when outside the home?

### **WARNING! Background & Reference Check**

Many nanny employers, especially first timers, place too much emphasis on their "gut feel after the interview and fail to adequately background and reference check their new nanny. Thorough reference checks can help you better understand the type of employee the nanny might be, including her strengths and weaknesses. This makes you, the employer, a better manager. [Background checking](#) is imperative – and with a cost of \$100 - \$150 on average it is foolish to skip this step.

The list above is not all inclusive; you need to evaluate your family's situation and work out your own list. Some families find some of these issues uncomfortable to approach with the nanny, especially in live in situations. Good communication and mutual respect are the keys to success.

## Trust your instincts!

Don't worry that your spouse or coworker might think you are paranoid. If your gut says there is something wrong, move on to other candidates.

## DO NOT...

1. Employ a nanny without checking references and employment history.
2. Ignore unexplained gaps or discrepancies in work and education history – always check them out until you are completely satisfied.

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